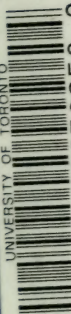


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W. B. Lathrop

—

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# MONOGAMY

*A SERIES OF  
DRAMATIC  
LYRICS*

*by*

GERALD GOULD



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Second Edition

LONDON

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1918



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

LYRICS

POEMS

AN ESSAY ON THE NATURE OF  
LYRIC

MY LADY'S BOOK

THE HELPING HAND



~~~~~  
D E D I C A T I O N  
W I T H A N  
E X P L A N A T I O N

~~~~~  
TO FRANCES & SYDNEY WOOD

~~~~~  
MY DEARS,

*Years ago, in what now seems a different world, when you never dreamt, the one of his Military Cross or the other of her Munitions, four of us—you and my wife and I—used to sit round the fire and discuss God and religion, and sex and marriage, and the other subjects that in each generation inevitably agitate the youthful and inquiring mind: and though we never solved insoluble problems, and though we still, no doubt, disagree on many points both social and ethical, those talks remain with me as living evidence that simple confident practice is the most convincing theory. The solution of the difficulties which make unhappy homes (such as this book treats of) is to be sought in the spirit which makes happy homes, and which, judging error and failure always in the light of our common humanity, never forgets that we are members one of another. Nowadays our opportunities of talking round the fire are too rare: but it has occurred to both*

*my wife and myself that to offer you these studies of unhappiness and mistake would be a fitting reminder of how, in all our talks, whenever the problems of evil came under discussion, your judgment of others was always compassionate and always wise.*

*This dedication, however, is not written about our love and admiration for you. Here would be no place to express those emotions, even if I had words to express them, and even if there were any necessity to express them in words at all. But, since my observation of man as a reading animal has led me to believe that, for one reader who will tolerate a preface, ten will tolerate a dedication, I want to incorporate here an explanation of what these poems are, and why they were written. In the first place, they are NOT PROPAGANDA. Didactic poetry is, doubtless, an admirable thing, but the whole of these poems of mine will be mistaken if they are supposed to be didactic. They are, simply and solely, dramatic lyrics. In each one of them a husband speaks, and speaks of his married life. Each poem tells a separate story, utterly unconnected with the others except by the one fact that all the husbands are unhappily married. The causes of unhappiness, as will be seen, differ widely. But I want to make clear that no such argument is intended as: "These cases of monogamy are failures: therefore monogamy is a failure." Like every other human being, I have opinions about marriage as an institution: only I defy anyone to tell from these pages what that opinion is. (I cannot forbear to quote here the witty opinion of an Oxford colleague of mine, who said: "England a moral nation? Why, there are fifty*

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people living, in this street alone, in open monogamy!") Neither the bitterest opponent nor the most convinced advocate of monogamy will deny that some marriages are unhappy. And whatever exists in experience is a fit and fair subject for treatment in poetry. I wrote these particular poems, and not different ones, because these came to me, and I could not help myself.

So I would beg the reviewers (a body for which, especially since I became a reviewer, I have considerable respect) to judge the poems as poems and not as opinions. Of course, there are opinions expressed in the poems, but those are meant to be the appropriate opinions of the persons speaking, and I have no part in them. The husband in the last poem but one, for instance, is an almost unmitigated cad, just as the husband in the poem preceding that is more than a bit of a prig. But I no more espouse their priggishness and caddishness than (if I may without impertinence evoke the aid of a great name) Browning advocated wife-murder when he wrote "*My Last Duchess*." The warning is necessary, because I showed these poems in manuscript to a brilliant and distinguished friend, who returned them with the astonishing remark that he would have liked "the women's points of view to have a show." As I see it, the women's points of view are shown between the lines throughout: they are, in fact, so insistently shown that my friend's mistake could not have been made, save through the assumption on his part that I in some way espoused the cause of the men who were criticising the women.

It is doubtless unnecessary, but it will not I hope be

*thought irrelevant, if I add, as a sort of stage-direction, that the dramatic convention in this book varies slightly from poem to poem. Thus, in the first poem, the words are not spoken by the husband to anybody: they are, as it were, thought towards the wife. In the second, they are both thought and (at least partly) spoken; and in the third they are spoken throughout. In the fourth, again, they are spoken, this time not to the wife but to a male acquaintance, in a bar. In the fifth they are not spoken at all, but express thoughts passing through the husband's mind, not, this time, towards, but rather about, the wife. In the sixth, they are spoken to a woman who is not the wife—all except the last four lines, which are I think a parenthetical comment of the speaker's own mind, and do not get spoken aloud. And in the seventh we have something which cannot without violence be sharply divided into words spoken to the wife and thoughts thought towards her.*

*And so, with thanks not only to you but to anyone else who has been sufficiently interested to read thus far, I remain,*

*Yours,*

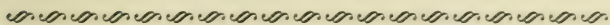
GERALD GOULD.

*MONOGAMY*

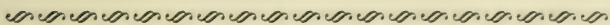




*M O N O G A M Y*



I



**Y**OU were young—but that was scarcely to  
your credit:

Pretty—as one expects the young to be:

And you were very much in love with me,  
And half I lured it on, and half I fled it,

Till honour turned its foolish face on mine  
—Taking for allies music and good wine—  
And told me what I ought to say: I said it.

Folk, overawed by so much happiness,  
Decided on a quiet wedding.—Well,  
That doesn't leave the poet much to tell;  
The bride was married in a travelling-dress;  
The mothers, weeping, sold remarks by retail;  
Good taste had been observed in every detail;  
The quiet wedding was a great success.

I



And then—the night! the happy sacred night  
With the soft flame of bridal lamps aglow!  
Your white face in its terror moved me so,  
I nearly learned life's lesson—but not quite:  
I touched the skirts of Purity-in-Passion;  
Almost, to use the satyr-words of fashion,  
Did I forbear to press the husband's right.

One moment, then, we clung together thus,  
Your face down-turned and trembling to my  
breast,  
My heart desiring only what was best—  
The stuff of moments is too perilous;  
But God, perhaps, when we lie racked in Hell,  
Will think—when for one moment we loved  
well,  
How close we were to Him!—and weep for us.

Behold the strife of virtues and of sins,  
Of soul and body!—Let the trumpets sound  
From the four corners of the battle-ground!  
The loud and fortunate blaze of war begins!  
—But different is the case with neither pride  
Nor faith nor hope nor love on the soul's side,  
Nor good digestion.—So the body wins.

And now we have a boy—like me, they say;  
Also, I think, a little bit like you  
—The pledge of what is wrong between us  
two;

And night by night, and day by sordid day,  
I must fulfil the blasphemy, and live  
To get the filthy gift not fit to give,  
That he may thank me when his hair is grey.

And always through the sunshine, like a tune  
Played softly from a green-and-golden bower,  
The women walk in gentleness of power,  
Ready to share, but not with me, their boon:  
Everywhere pass, with lips for me unmoved,  
The lovely ladies that I might have loved,  
That never now will love me, late or soon.

O happy girls, discreet in joviality!  
Decoy of fingers and appeal of eyes,  
Summoning the soul to be sincere and wise,  
And love not in the flesh, but in totality!  
O loves forbidden, I'll go home and start  
My pipe and light my fire and break my heart,  
And read a book on sexual morality.

NO, you are not less kind and not less fair;  
 Your face is quite as wistful as it was;  
 This cold respect of mine is not because  
 Of anything you look or speak or wear:  
 Your views have still the justness that I told  
 Myself of, saying—"How young a heart, how  
 old  
 A head!"—I like the way you do your hair.

I'd rather have a tragic tale to tell:  
 If I had found you false or vile or set  
 To make a scarecrow of my vain regret  
 And frighten off the bird of hope too well,  
 My feet would have rejoiced to shed their dust:  
 There's nothing heavenly in the ways of lust  
 —That would be earth of earth: but this is hell.

The heart loves on—not gladly, as it did,  
 Yet not with less of beauty for its pain:  
 The tremblings and the whisperings again  
 Call the swift hands and eager feet amid  
 Delights too deep for anyone save me

—“Only myself and you” it used to be  
—Now, “me and her”? The imps of mirth forbid.

The flame burns on the same though changed its  
air:

It burns as fresh, I dare to say as pure  
—O sorry stuffs that can themselves endure,  
But not give permanence to the forms they wear!  
So go the empires and the dynasties  
The way of flesh and grass; and so the skies,  
Hushed o’er with stars, seem scarcely worth a  
stare.

But dreadfulest the fall if love can range!

—Well, this cold touch of mine may go to  
prove

The strongest things may melt, the stablest  
move:

Eternity’s another word for change.

You are so good, so beautiful, so true  
To everything that I desire of you,  
And yet I don’t desire you. It is strange.

Not you!—but then, can fresh desire be right?

How measure one against the other, gauge

The totals at the foot of either page,  
When in my heart of hearts through dark and  
    bright,  
And in my brain of brains from noon to noon,  
The violins of passion swirl a tune  
As brave as morning and as fond as night?

I will not set the new against the old  
    —Too false the battle, and too dim the air  
    With counter-cry and question everywhere!  
—Arithmetic has always left me cold:  
    I know I was sincere, I know I am:  
    Sincerity has special power to damn—  
So little's left to plead when truth's been told.

Come near me, nearer—let me touch your brow.  
    I've hoped I was mistaken—I am not:  
    And yet you can't suppose I leave forgot  
The close warm nights that ask what they allow!  
    —God, from these troubled eyes remove the  
        fear,  
    Or from those limbs the whiteness!—O, my  
        dear,  
Such prayers strike home and end it—don't they,  
    now?



III

WE'VE been drifting further apart for years?—

Who should know it better than I?—

And you've paid in service and shame and tears

For the things you never wanted to buy?—

For the house and grounds, the woods and  
waters,

Crisp loaves, and fishes in large glass bowls,

And five presentable sons and daughters—

*Six* immortal if perilous souls!

Those at least you must thank me for,

Though the pain, of course, was yours alone,

And the one that held your heart far more

Than all the others lies under a stone—

A little stone with, word for word,

The truth as truth on our earth is reckoned:—

“Born October the twenty-third,

Died November the twenty-second.”

Our eldest son!—the one that came

When still through the warp and woof of days

Darted the gloom of doubt and blame,  
    Flashed the silver of promise and praise!  
When still the problem was how to make  
    The best of each other's evil and good—  
Before the business of give-and-take  
    Was all too bitterly understood!

For the children, I say, you owe me gratitude;  
    There at least you have touched divinity;  
The merest grin of maternal beatitude  
    Is worth a world of dull virginity—  
So, at any rate, mothers tell us,  
    Who ought to know; and, for my part,  
Man as I am, I have been jealous,  
    To know how the babies leapt under your  
    heart.

And think of the pride we have in them now!  
    There's Dora, who's plain, but an L.R.C.M.;  
And Grace, with the Grecian nose and brow  
    And the pale hair wreathed for a diadem;  
And little Belle, the mere sight of whom warms  
    me,  
    She eats her food with such childish avidity;

And Johnny, who's honest, his chief informs me,  
Up to—and over—the verge of stupidity.

But Sam is our glory, with grease on his head,  
And bordered waistcoats and ordered socks,  
Strange hours of seeking and leaving his bed,  
And a large contempt for trains and clocks.  
Our family mingles all kinds of endeavour;  
Sam's bright and still, like a monument—  
But tell me, dear, have you realised ever  
What it means that Johnny has played for  
Kent?

Bowed head, so white, and writhing fingers,  
And face averted all the time,  
I may reason with you while reason lingers,  
For reason to you is the same as rhyme!  
Count your blessings, and then dismiss them!  
Shiver your frightened hands away—  
Lest I catch them again, as of old, and kiss them,  
And to-morrow dawn like yesterday!

For think, my dear, it isn't only  
Circuses, bread—the outer shell!  
Once your eyes were young and lonely,

Your hands a-tremble for heaven or hell—  
You shut your eyes, lest the world of harms  
Should show what you could not bear to see—  
And the shy blind hunger of your arms  
Groped in the dawn, and met with me.

Days of wonder and nights of passion!  
Close exchange of the closest things!—  
When did kissing go out of fashion,  
Or the little gay Love-God stretch his wings?  
It's true that I never took thought to save you  
From the snares of custom where they lay;  
But, by God, in the morning of life I gave you  
More than its hours can take away!

You haven't forgotten that?—and surely,  
If you remember, the thing is settled;  
Troubles poison the heart obscurely,  
And you've been nervy and I've been nettled,  
And you've thought vain thoughts and shed vain  
tears—

What's that you murmur so low, so low?  
Every night for thirty years  
You've remembered—and now you know!

And the aim of your knowledge, now, at last,  
With our fortunes rounded and complete,  
Is to snap the spell of the sacred past,  
And shatter the present about your feet,  
And turn to a future as bleak and cold  
As a heath by winter battered and blown—  
You choose alone to grow tired and old,  
And to die and be buried alone, alone!

You've never brought any complaint till now,  
Nor asked for succour in any distress,  
And I haven't been heartless, you'll allow,  
More than other men—rather less!  
And then—the children—they form a link  
Which a mother should be the last to break.  
Darling, think of the scandal—think  
Of what it will cost—for the children's sake!

I hear you mutter that, day by day,  
Stifling the sigh, suppressing the word,  
You've pressed your feet to the stony way,  
The claim of your happiness crushed unheard,  
For the children's sake—and now you see



They've never realised—no, not one;  
They've all been centred in self, like me,  
And your strength is spent, the thing is done.

Gathering grey through a life of leisure—  
And O! the little things that tell!—  
The price of following harmless pleasure—  
And O! the slowness of going to hell!—  
Silly and empty and casual hours,  
And your heart broken with playing its part,  
And mine too much drained of its passions and  
powers  
Even to feel like a broken heart!

I HAD ambitions once, and I was steady:  
 A sort of drawing-office I was in.  
 (What's yours?—Well, thank you, mine  
 is two of gin):

The work was hard, but always found me ready:  
 I kept my health in hand and never worried,  
 And when a crisis came and folk got flurried,  
 The boss would cut the knot with—"Send for  
 Freddy!"

Figure the life, sir—up at half-past seven,  
 And at my work, with one hour off, from nine  
 Till six: then read till supper: wet or fine,  
 A stroll last thing: in bed before eleven.  
 That was my life, that was the way I ran it,  
 Placid and punctual as a blasted planet!  
 Dull, did you call it?—Why, sir, it was heaven!

For always, looking forward, I could see  
 The pure, the blinding vision of content.  
 My work meant forty bob a week?—It meant

Prospects and peace and children at my knee:  
Always in firelight when the dreams came clear  
They brought one face too fortunate and dear  
To think of now—and *that* was born for me.

It was no face I knew of in this life:  
It was too sure to be a recollection  
Of flesh and blood: it did not claim affection  
As women do, nor put desire at strife  
With circumstance and failure: it was lit  
By peaceful pitiful radiance: still to it  
My happy heart came home. It was my wife.

A room in the same house where I hung out  
Was lodged in by a girl I often saw:  
I grew to know her giggle, her shrill "O law!"  
Flung down the passage: I used to meet her pout  
Upon the landing—till her sidelong eyes  
Forced me on folly who had been so wise.  
We talked. We walked. I took the girl about.

Why? Why? I found her from the first a bore.  
She was all wrong. Pretty?—oh yes, as pretty  
As girls can be who merit scorn and pity  
But never love—a harlot to the core,

Without the harlot's pluck and lust of living  
—Too thin for sin, too blank to need forgiving,  
Silly and white and selfish, nothing more.

Anæmic leach that sucked and never swelled,  
How I do hate you!—but I did not then:  
I only wanted to get back to men,  
Who understood my speech, my ways, who held  
By old plain customs neither good nor bad,  
Who laughed and smoked—who did not drive  
me mad  
By artful moods that tortured—and compelled.

For she compelled me, played upon my fears,  
Fawned for my favour, for my pity set  
The trap of whining posturing regret  
Over things said and done: she met my sneers  
With tears, my smiles with kisses, till at last  
I of the watchful consecrated past  
Pawned her my future—all my priceless years.

You call me weak? But such remorseless harrying  
Would drive strong souls, I think, into a  
corner:  
Only the selfless saint and the light scorner

Can save their precious things from all mis-  
carrying.

Could I be harsh?—Her screams pierced  
through security.

Could I be kind?—She swore her maiden  
purity

Was compromised. *I* compromised on marrying.

Children? Oh yes, a handful—smeary-faced  
And draggle-tailed and stupid, always ill  
With snuffling colds: poultice and dose and pill  
Worry their lives out. Did you ever taste  
The biting tang of contrast? These were never  
The fair fond children of my soul's endeavour:  
These are the spawn of wantonness and waste.

Ambition foundered, lost—for, once tied up  
To pain, to want, betrayed to long betraying,  
I had no thought but to make light the paying  
For sorrows bought: a hungry man must sup  
Though he is damned—and in the passing  
pleasure

I tried to drown my dreams: drink, food, and  
leisure

I craved: I drugged myself to drain the cup

Of my own bitterness. The worst of such  
Slack ways and days is not the loss of cash.  
To turn my sense from sense of memory's lash,  
I used the woman whom I loathed to touch.  
Her soul and mine lie seven salt seas apart,  
And night by night I hold her to my heart.  
(Another drink? Yes, thank you very much.)



THE girl that I am married to  
Has lots of trivial things to do:  
    Calling and tennis, reading Zola,  
    And playing on the pianola.  
She was a little eager thing  
When first I thought of marrying,  
With lips half-blanced as though in fright,  
And eyes unsteady to the light,  
And thin soft fingers fumbling still  
At the shut fortress of my will,  
Until she moved the bars at last.  
I took her to myself. I cast  
The matter of our diverse life  
Into the mould of man-and-wife.  
That was the venture. How it sped,  
You ask me? Go and ask the dead  
How in their house of moving worms  
They keep their cold continuous terms!  
The wrong that caught us in its mesh  
Was just the need of flesh for flesh:  
When first she touched me, to the touch  
I did not thrill: I thrilled too much

To that weak wooing in the end!  
Her soul was never my soul's friend:  
Each was a stranger in the gloom  
Of life's ambiguous catacomb,  
Groping and falling, on stray sins  
Barking unwise unhappy shins,  
And with stray virtues lightly met:  
Both sin and virtue breed regret,  
But neither makes the poor heart break  
Like the fond folly of mistake.  
I do not blame her that she brings  
Her feet to follow trivial things:  
For who am I that I should blame?  
Perhaps my own soul's soaring claim  
To guess in the gross ways of man  
Some hint of God's celestial plan,  
To frame the fashions of my mind  
Up the calm scale of angel-kind,  
To lean my ear to the long moan  
Of sorrow's infinite undertone,  
To catch, a-glitter on life's stream,  
The dancing diagrams of dream  
—Perhaps all this and more than this  
Is but as my girl's laughter is,  
A weak and unsure thing, a mock

For the undubitable clock  
Of sun and moon and steady hours.  
O life and death, O height of powers  
Unscalable—between two scopes,  
Those slavish aims, these royal hopes,  
Each almost too minute for view,  
What difference does there seem to you?  
We go our ways, we blame or praise  
The diapason of our days,  
And this one laughs and that one thinks,  
And hope crumbles and promise shrinks,  
And in a little while at most  
We yield the uncomfortable ghost:  
Women of beauty, men of mark,  
Lie white and quiet in the dark.  
What matters it? I will be kind  
To her who once could shake my mind:  
If I'm unhappy, who is not?  
My wife herself, though she has got  
All that she has the skill to want,  
Though that pale soul will never pant  
Across the upland hoar with dew  
After the flying Fair-and-True:  
Though she's content to find her best  
In plays and novels, in the zest

Of formal friendship, casual pleasure  
—My wife herself misdoubts her treasure.  
Sometimes, when twilight breaks my heart,  
I come upon her, drawn apart,  
Begging, with those pathetic eyes,  
Some nameless bounty of the skies  
—Wishing, perhaps, for greater range  
Of interest in matters strange  
—Wishing, perhaps, the night's first star  
Were made less lovely or less far  
—Wishing, perhaps, I loved her more:  
And then I love her as before,  
And kiss her, and she goes away  
(To dress for dinner, let us say)  
Singing: and I am left to drain  
The twilight's breathless draught of pain,  
Incredible, obscure, unguessed—  
The bright dark silence. For the rest,  
I will be good, or try to be,  
To my wife always: surely she  
Will thrill with laughter so—and I,  
Like others, need but live and die,  
And shall have meantime, down the years,  
That thin shrill laughter in my ears.

COME, since I love you in a cleanly fashion,  
 Since you're the best friend that I have,  
 no more

(These kisses we exchange we'd give before  
 The world, but for convention—there's no  
 passion

In this contagion of our hands at all)  
 —Since we have safety and innocence at call,  
 The world lies bare for us to lay the lash on.

You know my wife—you think I'm hard upon  
 her:

I wish you had to live with her a little:

You'd find your patience not a scrap less brittle  
 Than mine. I've tried being patient—tried to  
 con her

As one would con a dull disgusting book  
 Given by a friend—and found at every look  
 Stupidity far baser than dishonour!

I cannot plumb the shallows of that woman:  
 Think of the utmost range of imbecility

The mind can stretch to: add a pale humility,  
A deprecating simper scarcely human!

I loved her once—O blind and bungling  
Cupid!—

I could not guess her so sublimely stupid:  
She plays me Schumann now, and calls him  
"Shooman."

Plays? But she plays by hitting the right notes  
So dully that they might as well be wrong.

Sings? But her thin banality of song!

Talks? About food and servants, hats and coats.

Reads? But, blank-lost amid the world of  
letters,

She finds no way, she will not trust her betters:  
In art, she can't distinguish sheep from goats.

And art to me is everything, you know:

I'm nothing if not subtly sensitive:

Colours and tones and harmonies!—I live

For these, for shades of meaning, for the glow  
Of evenings starred and lamped with urgent  
light,

For whispers of the conscious day and night,  
Flickering dubiety of life's ebb-and-flow.



And you can share it!—everything I miss  
In the white woman fettered to my side:  
All that the bridegroom spirit from the bride  
Asks in the spirit—you can give me this,  
And you *do* give it! More I would not ask:  
My mind and yours twine in their mutual task,  
And body doesn't count. Still, just one kiss!

We sit and cast our curses at the cursed  
Conventions of the muddled world: we find  
This thrilling matrimony of chaste mind  
Better than sin—or virtue: best and worst  
Of fashion's judgments are alike to us.  
The dull and fuddled, flushed and amorous,  
We scorn them all in order—my wife first.

The false refinement which would tie my tongue  
When your sweet sympathy has let it loose  
Is one of many things transcended: truce  
To those stale standards forced upon the young!  
I, too, was bred up in the cult and code  
By which one must not dare to name the toad  
If one has married it—but I have flung

Defiance to all that: my one gross blunder  
Is paid for by the penance I must do:  
I will not pay for it with silence too.  
(And yet, perhaps, God with His imminent  
thunder  
Watches to strike: perhaps He hates my ways  
Of long unkindness, of secure self-praise:  
Perhaps He sees my heart, and yours. I wonder.)

VII

I DID you wrong in taking you to wife,  
And I am sorry for it—I supposed  
Discrepancy of spirit could be glozed  
Over; but it cuts deeper than the knife.  
Because my spirit had been sorely spent  
And your young eyes were kind and innocent,  
I took your life to help eke out my life.

O sophistry and failure! Very surely,  
If the soul, by the fiend desire attacked,  
Lets the fond wish be father to the act,  
Lets the grave theory with meek eyes demurely  
Follow where selfishness has hotly led,  
From that one lie ten thousand lies are bred,  
And never again is anything done purely.

I did believe—how should I not believe?—  
That what I had was fit to trick you out  
In armour, proof against the stings of doubt:  
How would I watch you, tend you! How  
receive

In my own breast the world's insidious dart!  
How spend the hoarded passion of my heart  
Lest, in an idle moment, you should grieve!

O blasphemy that punishes itself!

Here are the precious objects—count them  
over

Against the wild kiss of a virgin lover!—

Etchings and lithographs and china and delf,  
Orchards and flaming gardens and trim grass  
(See the long summer shadows, how they  
pass!)

And libraries, thick-stacked on every shelf;

And voyage and adventure—east and west

I took you, tracking beauty as we went:

Thin spires and faery domes for your  
content

Lifted their lines against the sun. The best

That the wide world could offer I could offer

—Save the good gift that's not in any coffer:

I could not bring you home and give you rest.

My house was never home to you: your soul

Turned bright eyes like a bird for shy escape

(O fluttering eager wonder of your shape,  
To conquer it, to tame it, to control!)  
—You tried so hard for goodness, tried so hard  
To hush your wings' beat under my regard,  
I could but turn my eyes away. The whole

Of my life's lie stood up to cry "For shame!"  
—When the white spring along the lanes  
broke new,  
There was no morning flower that was not you;  
They swooned for young love, and you caught  
the flame:  
A sweet perplexity of thought and blood  
Burnt in your cheek: I knew: I understood  
What was the price you paid to bear my name.

And so my name became a thing to hate:  
Your touch I sickened for and yet must shun:  
I could not finish the base work begun—  
Unhappy they who know their God too late!  
And the shy smile grew subtle, grew  
distracted;  
The wild perplexity of blood and thought  
How scared and snared in burning bonds of  
Fate!

I knew, my dear, I knew—had my eyes told me  
Nothing, the aching of my sense had told:  
Sweet, sweet and bitterer for the sweet you  
hold  
Back for another, while your warm arms hold me!  
—No, touch me not, as I would touch you not:  
Go from me: I have neither part nor lot  
In my own dreams that like a fire enfold me.

Go, child, and take my dreams of even and morn:  
They are not mine at all, but yours: your  
youth  
Was all, I think, I ever guessed of truth,  
And of that truth this falsity is born:  
So wags the world, and one thing's like  
another,  
And chastity has lust for very brother,  
And life puts death, and death puts life, to scorn.

Go. Do I grudge you?—What is left to grudge?  
You should have then known better than to  
yield  
To me—(The ultimate loss! the shameful field  
Whence faith has fled that promised not to budge!  
“Never to blame her” was my creed—and now



Have I not sought to smirch the faultless brow?  
Not faith nor truth, but pity, be my judge!)

Go. That you leave me to the absence of you  
Is nothing: pain is nothing, nothing I:  
But that the boy beneath whose gaze you lie  
Should be the second so to yearn above you!  
That you, with all your infinite life to live,  
Should lack the one thing that is life to give!  
How I have wronged you, dear—and how I love  
you!

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